

United Church of Christ General Synod Resolution, 1985

Calling on United Church of Christ Congregations to Declare Themselves Open and Affirming

Whereas, the Apostle Paul said that, as Christians, we are many members, but we are one body in Christ (Rom. 12:4), and Jesus calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mk. 12:31) without being judgmental (Mt. 7:1-2) nor disparaging of others (Lk. 18:9-14); and

Whereas, recognizing that many persons of lesbian, gay and bisexual orientation are already members of the church through baptism and confirmation and that these people have talents and gifts to offer the United Church of Christ, and that the UCC has historically affirmed a rich diversity in its theological and biblical perspectives; and

Whereas, the Tenth through Fourteenth General Synods have adopted resolutions encouraging the inclusion, and affirming the human rights, of lesbian, gay and bisexual people within the UCC; and

Whereas, the Executive Council of the United Church of Christ adopted in 1980 "a program of Equal Employment Opportunity which does not discriminate against any employee or applicant because of...sexual orientation"; and

Whereas, many parts of the church have remained conspicuously silent despite the continuing injustice of institutionalized discrimination, instances of senseless violence and setbacks in civil rights protection by the Supreme Court; and

Whereas, the church has often perpetuated discriminatory practices and has been unwilling to affirm the full humanness of clergy, laity and staff with lesbian, gay and bisexual orientation, who experience isolation, ostracism and fear of (or actual) loss of employment; and

Whereas, we are called by Christ's example, to proclaim release to the captives and set at liberty the oppressed (Lk. 4:18); and

Whereas, examples of covenant of Openness and Affirmation and Non-discrimination Policy may be found in the following:

Example 1: COVENANT OF OPENNESS AND AFFIRMATION

We know, with Paul, that as Christians, we are many members, but are one body in Christ-members of one another, and that we all have different gifts. With Jesus, we affirm that we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves, that we are called to act as agents of reconciliation and wholeness within the world and within the church itself.

We know that lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are often scorned by the church, and devalued and discriminated against both in the church and in society. We commit ourselves to caring and concern for lesbian, gay and bisexual sisters and brothers by affirming that:

- we believe that lesbian, gay and bisexual people share with all others the worth that comes from being unique individuals;
- we welcome gay, lesbian and bisexual people to join our congregation in the same spirit and manner used in the acceptance of any new members;
- we recognize the presence of ignorance, fear and hatred in the church and in our culture, and covenant to not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, nor any other irrelevant factor, and we seek to include and support those who, because of this fear and prejudice, find themselves in exile from a spiritual community;
- we seek to address the needs and advocate the concerns of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in our church and in society by actively encouraging church instrumentalities and secular governmental bodies to adopt and implement policies of non-discrimination; and
- we join together as a covenantal community, to celebrate and share our common communion and the reassurance that we are indeed created by God, reconciled by Christ and empowered by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Example #2: INCLUSIVE NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

We do not discriminate against any person, group or organization in hiring, promotion, membership, appointment, use of facility, provision of services or funding on the basis of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, faith, nationality, ethnicity, marital status, or physical disability.

THEREFORE, the Fifteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages a policy of non-discrimination in employment, volunteer service and membership policies with regard to sexual orientation; encourages associations, Conferences and all related organizations to adopt a similar policy; and encourages the congregations of the United Church of Christ to adopt a non-discrimination policy and a Covenant of Openness and Affirmation of persons of lesbian, gay and bisexual orientation within the community of faith.